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SUBJECT: DARFUR UNIVERSITIES DEVELOP PROGRAMS AROUND USG BOOK
DONATIONS

11. (U) SUMMARY. On May 29, FieldOffs delivered the final installment of USG-provided English language teaching materials to the Languages Department at Nyala University. Department head Dr. Mahmoud Adam Daoud thanked FieldOffs for the donation, noting that Nyala University had set a goal to train all staff basic English writing and presentation skills by the end of 2008, and that the USG-provided materials would help to meet that goal. Similar donations were made to English faculties at El Fasher University and Zalingei University in April, as well as to English language centers in El Fasher. End Summary.

Nyala University

12. (U) In a May 29 meeting at Nyala University, FieldOffs presented the Languages Department with English teaching materials, including instructor books, CDs and magazines. Department head Dr. Mahmoud Adam Daoud gratefully accepted the donation, noting that the materials were both useful and timely. He explained that the university had instituted a program to teach all members of the faculty how to write a paper or make a presentation in English; however, the project had suffered from shortages of teaching manuals and materials. As such, the Dean of the Faculty had tasked senior language instructors to develop a manual for the course, in addition to their regular teaching schedules. Although Daoud estimated that 40% of the staff has met their goal, the slow development of teaching materials had threatened to prevent the staff from reaching 100% competency.

13. (U) A week after the donation of the teaching materials, Daoud told FieldFSN that department heads had discussed the project in their most recent meeting. He was excited that the donation, which included Shaping the Way We Teach English instructor's manuals and CDs, would save senior staff time and energy, and ensure that the most current and effective teaching methods were being used. The department heads had agreed to divide the instructor manual into chapters, assigning one to each faculty head. Each person would study a chapter, develop a teaching module for that chapter, and then present it to the rest of the team. This would allow for staff to develop and share best practices, help institutionalize training-of-the-trainers exercises, and ultimately provide the basis for better education of the students, he noted.

El Fasher

14. (U) Dr. Suleiman Nurein, Dean of the Faculty of Education in El Fasher University, found the Shaping the Way We Teach English manuals useful, and wondered if there were versions available for intermediate and advanced level learners. He liked the structure of the lessons, and thought it would be tremendously beneficial for the students to continue with the program past the beginner level. Nurein noted that the English Teaching Forum magazines were also helpful, and offered to have his staff and students participate in writing articles about their experiences in exchange for a subscription or regular delivery of the magazine.

15. (U) Aslan English Training Center and SULET, another local ElQasher language school, received copies of the magazines, and said that they were already looking forward to the next issue. The ASLAN training Center manager said that 77 students enrolled in the next English language course will receive the magazines, which will be part of the reading curriculum. (Note: Donations of instruction manuals, CDs and magazines were also made to Zalingei University; however, mobile network outages have made it difficult to follow up with contacts in West Darfur. End Note.)

Comment

16. (U) Even low-cost programs, such as book and magazine donations, have high impact in resource-starved Darfur. Darfuris are surprisingly well-educated, interested in American culture, and desperate for any form of constructive entertainment in a way that transcends the typical handout mentality. The dedicated staff at the universities, as well as the Cultural Center in El Fasher (septel), would make ideal partners for USG-sponsored educational and cultural programming - from book donations to support for local theater and arts. Darfur's remote location makes cultural engagements difficult, but that much more important. The Field Office will continue to reach out to these marginalized groups, and welcomes opportunities, suggestions, and additional resources to do so.

FERNANDEZ